

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 08037 092254Z

71

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, CO, PN

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT LOPEZ SPEAKS ON PANAMA CANAL IN RADIO
INTERVIEW

1. ON AUGUST 8, THE TWO-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ' ADMINISTRATION, THE PRESIDENT GAVE AN HOUR-LONG RADIO INTERVIEW IN WHICH THE ISSUE OF THE PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS WAS AMONG THE WIDE VARIETY OF TOPICS COVERED.

2. ASKED IF THE VIABILITY OF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE U.S. AND PANAMA ON THE CANAL WOULD BE GREATER IF JIMMY CARTER WON THE PRESIDENCY, LOPEZ ANSWERED "YES." HE POINTED OUT THAT, ACCORDING TO HIS UNDERSTANDING, THE GREATEST OPPOSITION WITHIN THE U.S. TO A PANAMA ACCORD HAS COME FROM THE SOUTH AND THAT A PRESIDENT FROM THAT REGION COULD BETTER COUNTER THAT NEGATIVE ATTITUDE. LOPEZ WENT ON TO EMPHASIZE THAT EFFORTS TOWARDS AN AGREEMENT SHOULD BE BI-PARTISAN IN NATURE SO THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE PANAMA NEGOTIATIONS COULD BECOME A NATIONAL CAUSE WITHIN THE U.S. THE BI-PARTISANSHIP, HE INDICATED, COULD BEST BE ACHIEVED IF SUCCESSIVE REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATIONS WERE INVOLVED IN AN AGREEMENT.

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PAGE 02 BOGOTA 08037 092254Z

3. LOPEZ SAID IT WAS IN THE INTEREST OF THE U.S. TO

TURN CANAL JURISDICTION OVER TO PANAMA, WHILE RETAINING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE CANAL, A TASK THAT PANAMA CAN NOT CARRY OUT. THE PRESIDENT STATED THAT, FOR PURPOSES OF DEFENSE, THE U.S. SHOULD REACH AGREEMENTS WITH PANAMA SIMILAR TO THOSE THE U.S. HAS WITH TURKEY AND SPAIN. LOPEZ SAID THAT INJURIES TO PANAMANIAN SENSIBILITIES ARISE OUT OF THE FACT THAT U.S. FORCES EXERCISE POLICE FUNCTIONS OVER PANAMANIAN IN THE CANAL ZONE AND THAT MOST ACTIVITIES OF U.S. TROOPS INVOLVE EXERCISING JURISDICTION OVER THE ZONE RATHER THAN DEFENSE AGAINST EXTERNAL THREATS.

4. COMMENT: AS EVIDENCED BY THE INTERVIEW, PRESIDENT LOPEZ' APPROACH TO THE CANAL ISSUE REMAINS MODERATE AND CHARACTERIZED BY THREE ELEMENTS: UNEMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR PANAMA, RECOGNITION OF U.S. DEFENSE INTERESTS, AND EMPHASIS ON POSITIVE ASPECTS FOR BOTH THE U.S. AND PANAMA.
DREXLER

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